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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5105
INFO RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0004
RUEHRY/AMEMBASSY CONAKRY 0169
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0737
RUEHKI/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0001
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 1509

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 000456

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IO/HR FOR GAYATRI PATEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2020

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SUBJECT: DEMARCHE DELIVERED: UK GIVES TACTICAL ADVICE ON
UPCOMING HRC SESSION

REF: STATE 16236

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Greg Berry for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

¶1. (C/NF) Alastair Long, head of the UN Human Rights team at the FCO, told Poloff in response to reftel demarche that HMG is broadly supportive of U.S. goals for the upcoming Human Rights Council session. He reported positive progress on the U.S. defamation of religions action plan within the EU. Long cautioned that the Council probably would not support a strong resolution on Iran and recommended a less ambitious resolution with the goal of weakening Iran's bid for election to the HRC. HMG is optimistic that it will be able to vote for a resolution on the Goldstone Report because the Palestinians have adjusted the text to avoid the report's problematic aspects. The UK supports a stronger, more coherent approach to UN human rights activities in the DRC and suggested that calling on the government to respond officially to recommendations already put forward by the thematic rapporteurs might help produce results. HMG supports a resolution on Guinea, but is somewhat pessimistic that it can be accomplished at the March HRC session. The UK supports the renewal of special procedure mandates for DPRK and Burma. End Summary.

Defamation of Religions

¶2. (C/NF) The UK agrees with the overall U.S. approach of providing a positive alternative to the Ad Hoc Committee's Defamation of Religions proposal. The UK has done some outreach in Geneva already and especially has lobbied for support in EU capitals. Long said the idea has been fully embraced by EU members who had been skeptical. Long said he and his colleagues had spoken with the Danes and the Dutch -- two of the countries most wary about the defamation issue -- in the past few days and that they were happy with the U.S. action plan. He also said the latest draft of the action plan had allayed UK concerns about language relating to racial profiling.

Iran Resolution: Careful Tactics Required

¶3. (C/NF) The UK strongly supports some sort of HRC action on the ongoing human rights violations in Iran but Long said that Iran had come out of the UPR process in a relatively strong position. Long said Iran's acceptance of a number of countries' UPR recommendations had lessened the appetite for strong sanctions among countries such as Chile, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Japan. He said the UK Permanent Representative in Geneva would be talking to those five

countries to gauge their willingness to support action, but he was not optimistic that they would support strong actions such as the establishment of a Special Rapporteur.

¶4. (C/NF) Long emphasized that the UK does not want to hand Iran a victory by having a resolution fail. HMG is looking positively on a somewhat scaled-back approach pitched to it in recent days by Human Rights Watch. The idea is to pass a short technical resolution asking for the Secretary General to produce an interim report on human rights in Iran. This could then be submitted before the May HRC elections. Highlighting ongoing problems in Iran and having a resolution on record could help thwart Iran's ambitions to win a seat on the Council. Long recommended that France and the EU lead the effort to avoid the appearance of UK and U.S. plotting. However, he predicted that top-level pressure from the U.S. administration might be necessary to obtain passage of any resolution.

Goldstone Report: Palestinian Resolution Promising

¶5. (C/NF) Long said the UK had heard that the proposed Palestinian text of a resolution on the Goldstone Report had removed objectionable elements, such as referring it to the ICC or Security Council, and was simply calling on both sides to continue their domestic investigations. He added that if the Palestinians had in fact amended the text to take into account U.S. and WEOG reservations it was important to reward the Palestinians for standing up to countries such as Pakistan and Egypt, which are pushing for unproductive and confrontational approaches.

DRC: UK Optimistic Smart Tactics Will Produce Results

¶6. (C/NF) Long said a strengthening of the current system of thematic mandates would be possible, though it would take strong diplomatic engagement from the U.S. He suggested that we call for a Special Rapporteur as an opening negotiating position. This would likely not pass, but we could then climb down to a position of keeping the seven thematic rapporteurs but modifying the regime somewhat to bring a stronger focus and coherence to their disparate efforts. He also suggested asking the DRC to produce a report for the HRC on the recommendations of the seven rapporteurs thus far would be a supplemental way to translate the work they have already done into action.

Guinea: Dubious about Chances of March Resolution

¶7. (C/NF) HMG's estimation is that a Guinea resolution in the upcoming March session may be difficult, but they would welcome additional information if the U.S. thinks otherwise. HMG supports a resolution, with Long agreeing with the U.S. view on the importance of Africa taking the lead.

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